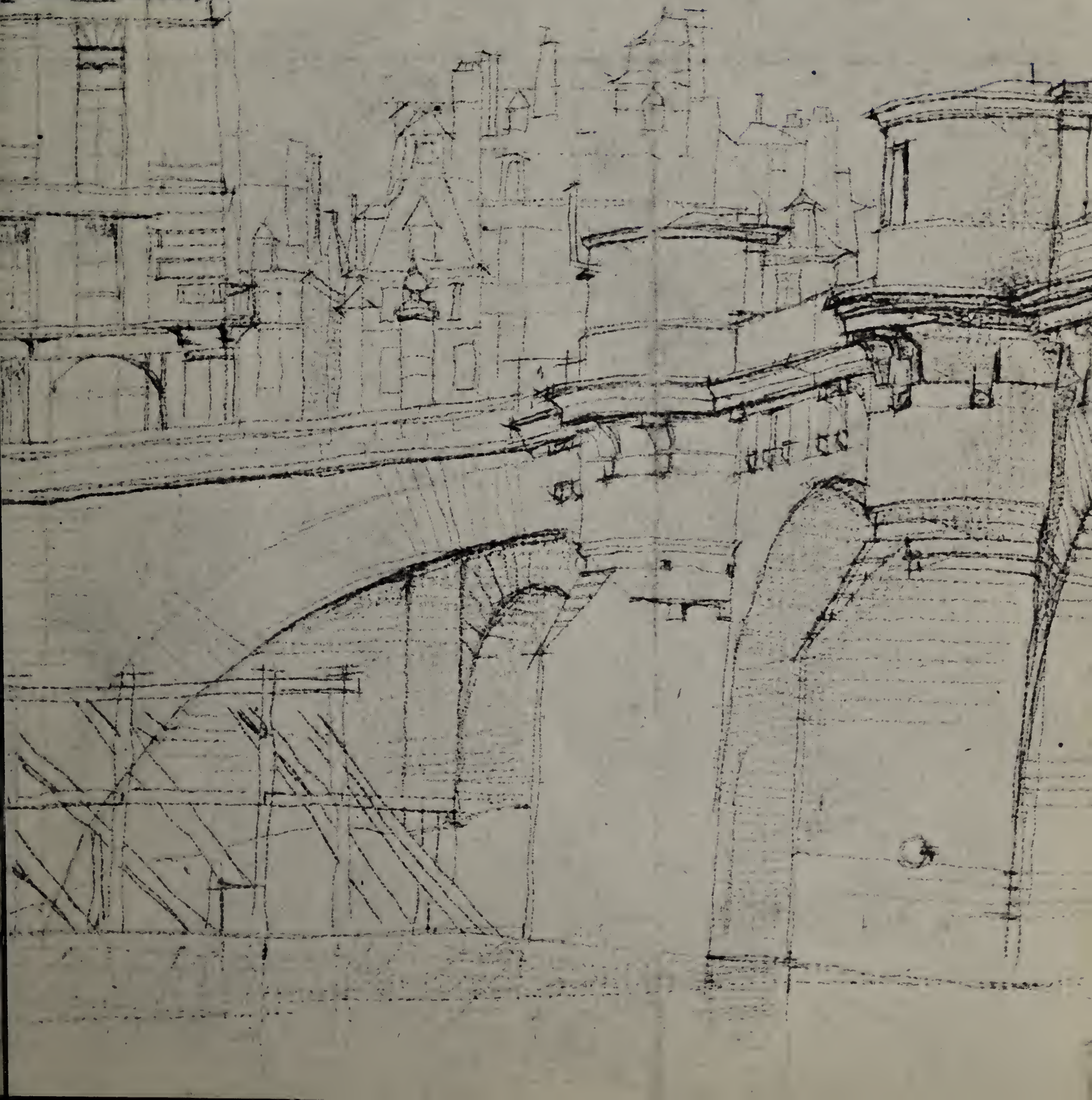
Museum News

THE TOLEDO MUSEUM OF ART

FOUNDED BY EDWARD DRUMMOND LIBBEY

SUMMER 1963



A NEGLECTED FRENCH ARTIST

There are many ways to collect works of art. One can form a representative collection covering various fields and many centuries. One can also collect in depth in one specific area.

This latter method often plays the important minor note in a complex symphony of major masterpieces. Such a collection in this Museum is that of 117 prints and original plates, 25 drawings, and several notebooks by that strange, neglected, but gifted French artist, Charles Meryon.

These works of art have been collected over many years. George Stevens, the Museum's first director, bought the first prints by Meryon in 1912 in Paris. Only a few months ago, we acquired our latest Meryon item, a rare manuscript, *Mes Observations*. In the intervening years, the bulk of the collection was acquired by purchase and by gifts from such generous donors as Winthrop H. Perry, Mrs. S. C. Walbridge, and Geoffrey R. Bennett.

Today this Museum has one of the world's outstanding collections of Meryon's art, rivaled in this country only by the Howard Mansfield and Deering Collections in Chicago's Art Institute. The Toledo material, while shown regularly in our galleries and published individually when in previous private collections, is here published for the first time as a part of our collection.

We hope the sampling of this strange and delightful artist in the following pages will induce readers to view Meryon's prints and drawings in the Museum's galleries.

Otto Wittmann, Director

Museum News

THE TOLEDO MUSEUM OF ART

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SUMMER 1963 ***New Series: Volume 6, Number 2***

EDITOR: Otto Wittmann

ASSISTANT EDITOR: Millard F. Rogers, Jr.

COVER: CHARLES MERYON (1821-1868). *Study for Le Pont Neuf, Paris.* (Delteil 33). Pencil. 1853. 6½ x 6¾ inches. Ex-collection: J. Niel; Destailleur; B. B. MacGeorge. 23.3106.

CHARLES MERYON (1821-1868)
Study for The Little French Colony of Akaroa, 1845.
(Delteil 71)
Pencil. 1845. 12 x 18½ inches.
Ex-collection: G. de Salicis; B. B. MacGeorge.
22.56.

THE DRAWINGS OF CHARLES MERYON

Drawings frequently are an artist's most personal, direct recordings on paper. In the preceding centuries, drawings have served as sketches, detailed renderings, or jottings to be reinterpreted and translated into paintings or prints. Occasionally, the original intention of the artist was to allow the pure drawing to be a final statement. The world's most sensitive and gifted painters, sculptors and architects have had strong foundations in draftsmanship, a keen appreciation and talent for the linear expression.

With few artists, however, is the act of drawing superior to that of painting. With the enigmatical Charles Meryon (1821-1868), printmaking was his foremost concern. Drawing on paper was the primary ignition, and etching a copper plate the final expression of his art. For him, painting had no place in his career; etching, which after all is basically an act of drawing, occupied all of his time and talent.

Charles Meryon was the illegitimate son of Dr. Charles Lewis Meryon and Pierre-Narcisse Chaspoux, a dancer with the Paris Opera. Left to the care of his mother, Meryon received some formal education before entering a naval

school at Brest, France. His naval career began, after graduation, with a Mediterranean cruise, and in 1842-1846 he visited the South Pacific islands, including New Zealand, New Caledonia, and Oceania. Touring and sailing, he made many sketches and drawings. Later, these drawings were developed into etched plates.

After separation from the navy, Meryon took a small studio in Paris, where he studied the etchings of Karel du Jardin, Salvator Rosa, and Reynier Zeeman, among others, and made copies of their work. In this way he learned the technique of etching, but seemed to absorb little of their styles. By 1850 he began his brooding, imaginative renderings of the city of Paris, illustrations that transcend mere architectural or antiquarian interest. Describing Meryon's etchings, Victor Hugo insisted on their greatness: "These etchings are magnificent productions. The breath of the universe breathes through all his works and makes them more than pictures. They are visions."

In his own day, Meryon was neglected and almost completely unappreciated. His few friends, always kept at a distance by Meryon's suspecting nature and inherent insanity, supported him and bought his etchings. Salon juries rejected his prints, and collectors did not recognize his immense talent. His series of Paris etchings, done between 1850-1854, were unnoticed by all but a few connoisseurs.

Meryon's admirers and friends included few artists, for Meryon had only contempt for art and its practitioners, including himself. Dr. Gachet, the psychiatrist and art collector who befriended Vincent Van Gogh, revealed that Meryon considered art an ideal, a fetish one dared not handle. "There are no artists," Meryon told Gachet, "art is too difficult. I, myself, am nothing."

After years of self-imposed deprivation and mental illness, Charles Meryon died believing that he was Christ imprisoned by the Pharisees, unwilling to eat food he thought was needed by the poor.

The subject matter of Meryon's art includes the architecture of medieval Paris, tropical islands in the Pacific, portraits, and mystical designs of a cryptic nature. All of his etched plates were executed between 1849-1866, but the drawings do not always coincide in date with the etching of the plates. A few plates in the New Zealand series date from 1866, over twenty years after he made his sketches as a young midshipman on naval duty. It has been impossible to detect the influences on Meryon's style. Although he admired the art of his contemporary, Felix Braquemond (1833-1917), his style was untouched by the work of others.

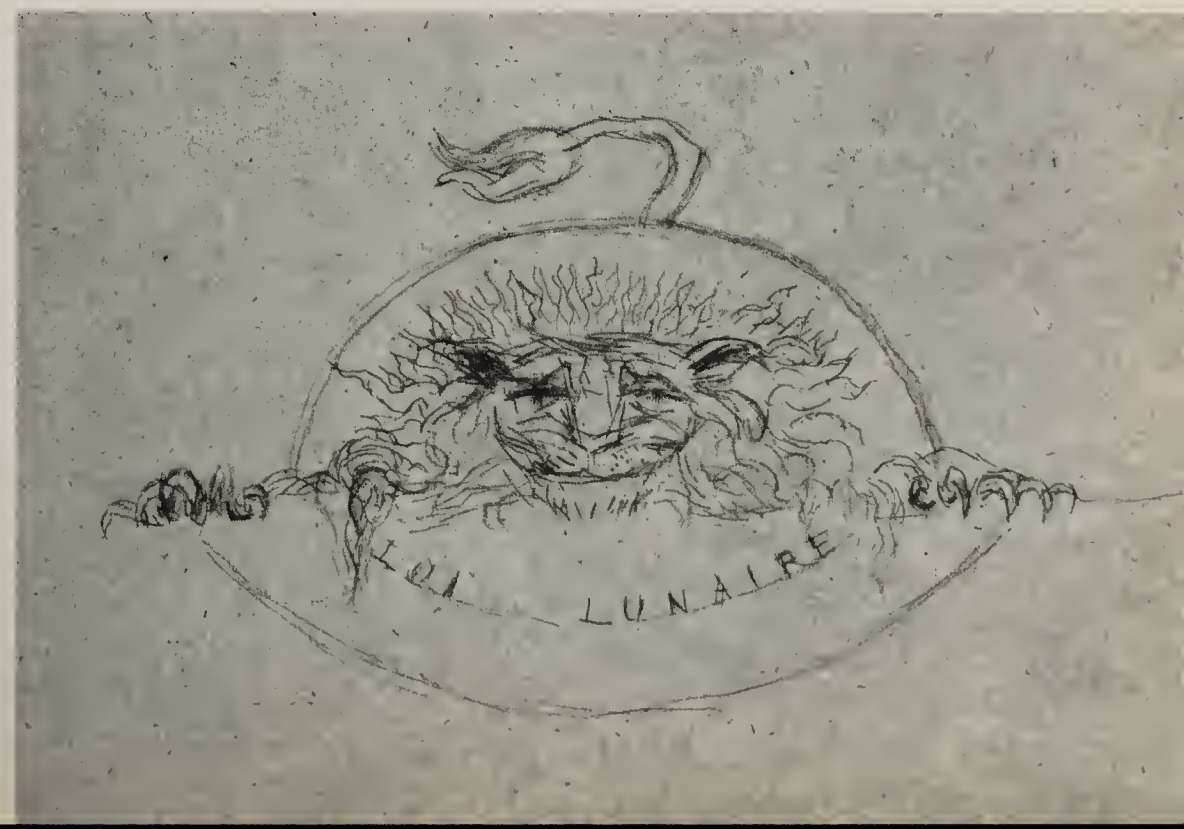
Meryon's drawings served almost exclusively as studies for his etched plates. These plates were not the reverse image of the drawings. The usual manner of copying a drawing onto a copper plate produces a reverse image when the plate is inked and printed. Meryon's manner employed some tracing or transfer of

the drawing to the plate in reverse of the original sketch, so that the printed impression resembled the original drawing.

Meryon's etchings are impeccable copies of his drawings, which were working tools occasionally annotated in his indecipherable handwriting and often signed with his initials and dated. Sometimes the drawings were scaled for transfer or enlargement. Small scraps of paper were often pieced together to extend a sheet of drawing paper. Very few of the drawings are finished, polished renderings with indications of shading, except for some drawings in the New Zealand series. A few drawings, such as *St. Etienne-du-Mont*, were carefully completed, finished works of art. Most, however, are simple linear conceptions with little suggestion of dark and light modelling.

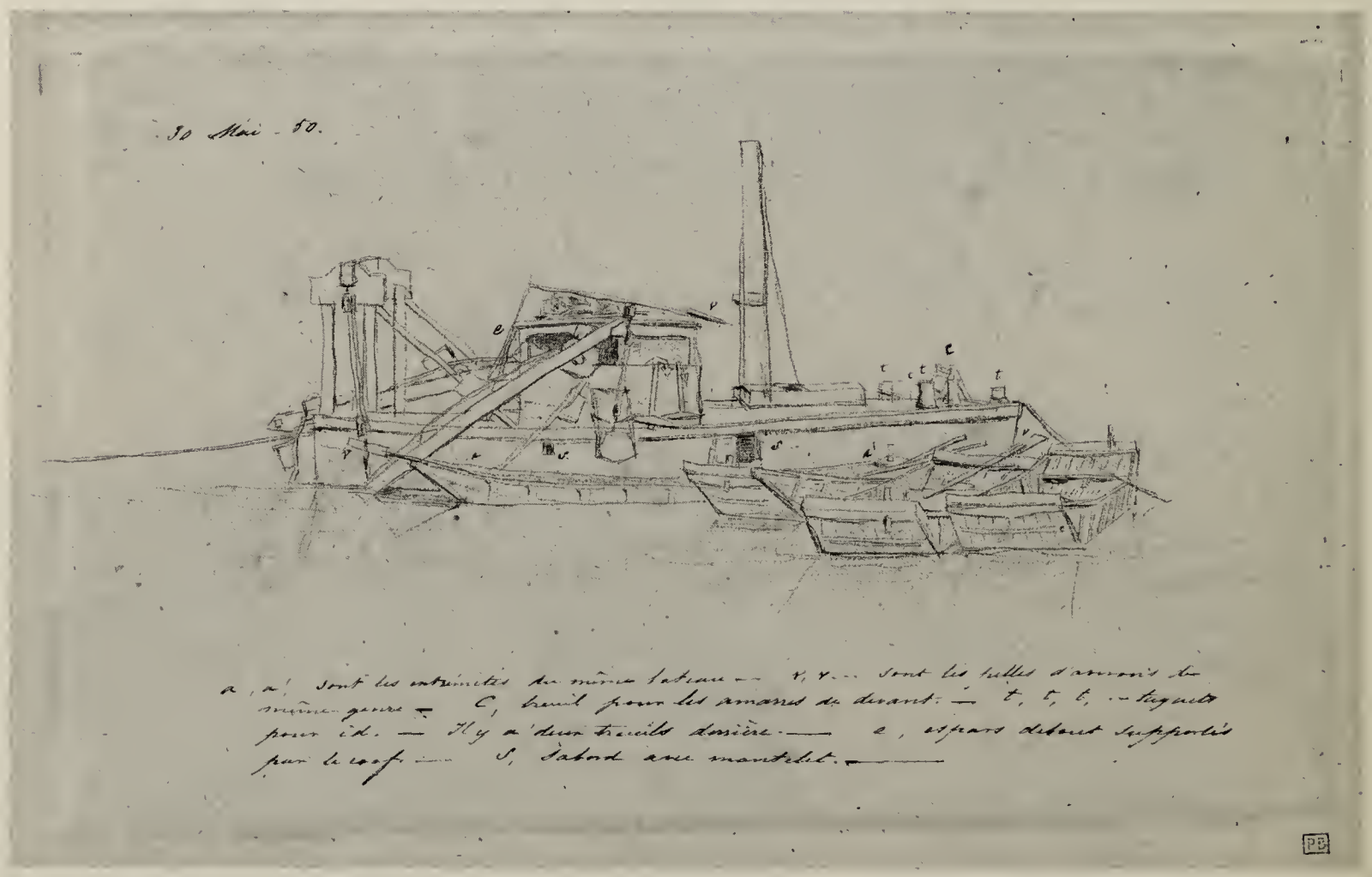
For Meryon, reality was synonymous with poetry. One of his patient friends and most ardent appreciators, Philippe Burty, in considering Meryon's style wrote in 1879: "Of an extremely sensitive nature, Meryon has taken the path pointed out by the school of romance, and which later on developed into naturalism. He translated with that clear view which French genius always claim, the poetry, mysterious and grand, of that old Paris which it was reserved to the children of the Second Empire to see ruthlessly disfigured and destroyed. Under his needle, the architecture, which had hitherto been only rendered by the severe tracings of the architect, or by the summary in water-colours of the decorator, became what a landscape does under the pencil of his art—namely, a Poem. He, as it were, borrowed of the reality only its features; he preserved the characteristic details of the construction and affixed to them the reflections of his melancholy or the secrets of his enthusiastic mind."

Millard F. Rogers, Jr.

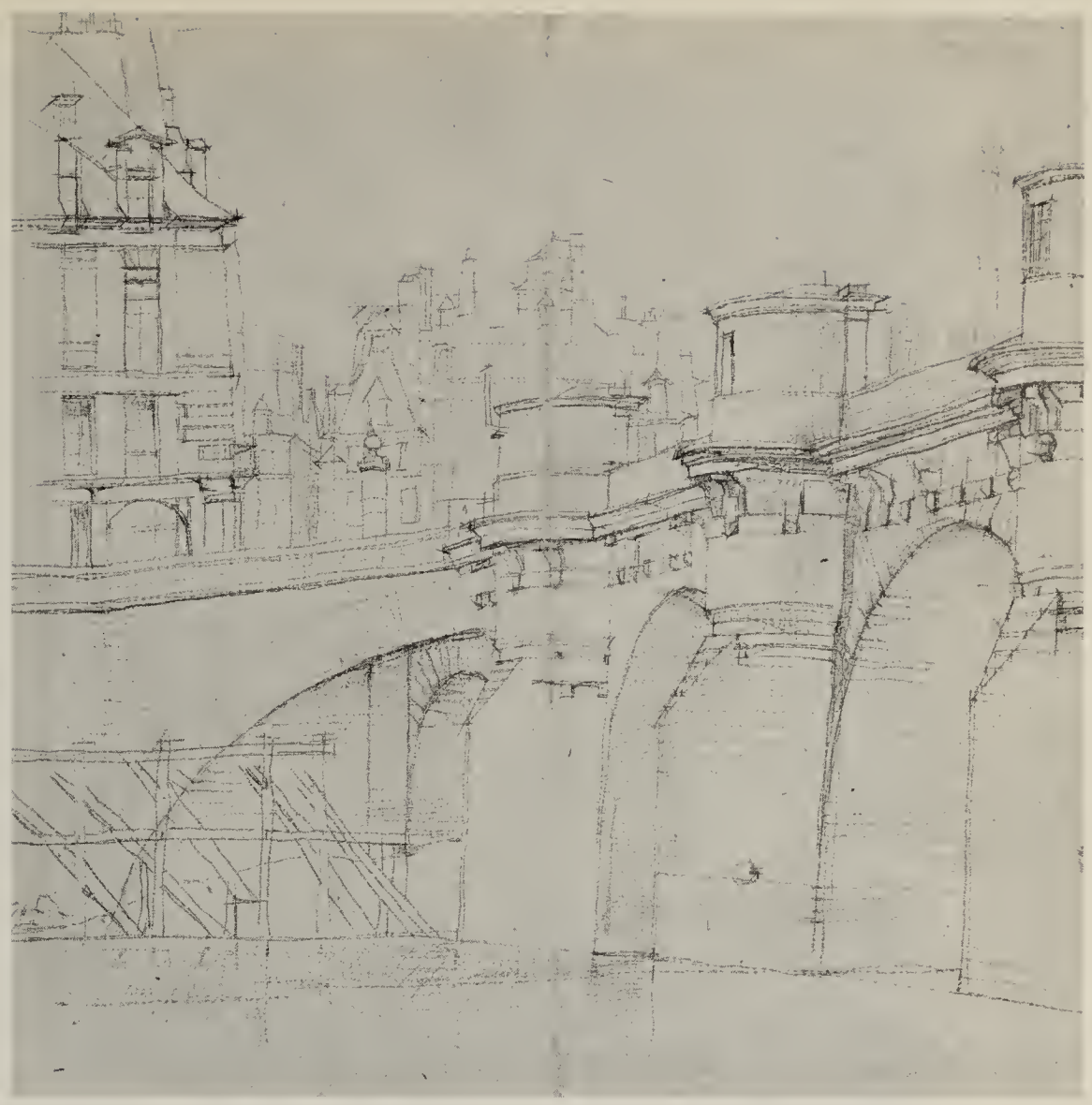


CHARLES MERYON (1821-1868)
Study for La Loi Lunaire (Lunar Law).
(Delteil 91).
Pencil. ca. 1856. 3¼ x 4-11/16 inches.
Ex-collection: Sir F. Seymour Haden.
23.3118.

CHARLES MERYON (1821-1868)
Chevrier's Cold Baths, called the School Baths.
(Delteil 44).
Pencil. 1864. 4¾ x 4½ inches.
Ex-collection: P. Burty; S. Haden.
25.13.


30 Mai - 50.
a, a' sont les extrémités du même bateau — v, v... sont les tuiles d'arrondis du même genre — C, bruit pour les amarres de devant — t, t, t, — tuyaux pour id. — Il y a deux treuils derrière — e, espars debout supportés par le roof — S, sabord avec mantelet.

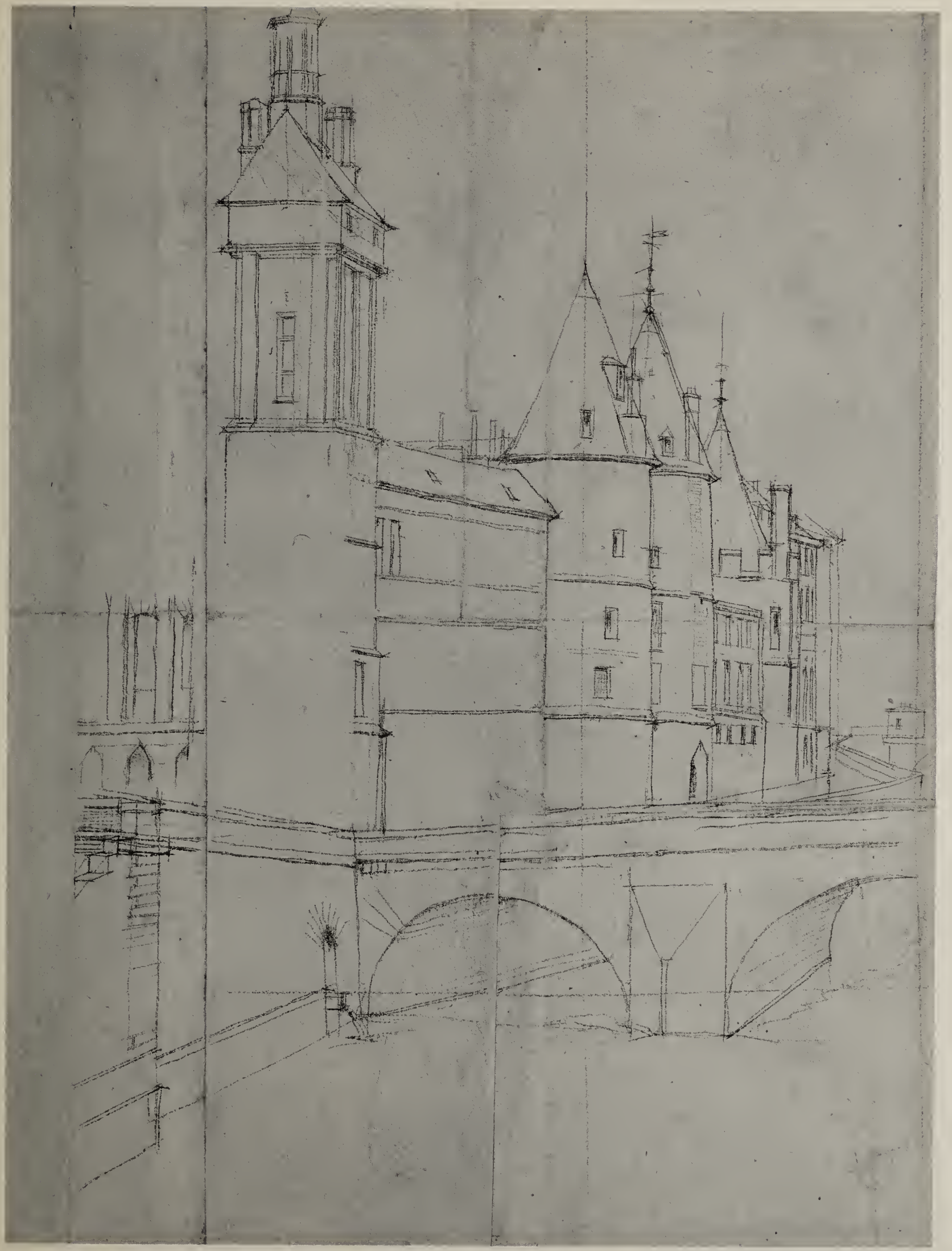
CHARLES MERYON (1821-1868)
A River Dredge and Lighters.
Pencil. 1850. 6½ x 10¼ inches.
Ex-collection: P. Burty; J. Heywood; B. B. MacGeorge.
23.3117.



CHARLES MERYON (1821-1868)
Study for Le Pont Neuf, Paris.
(Delteil 33).
Pencil. 1853. 6½ x 6¾ inches.
Ex-collection: J. Niel; Destailleur;
B. B. MacGeorge.
23.3106.

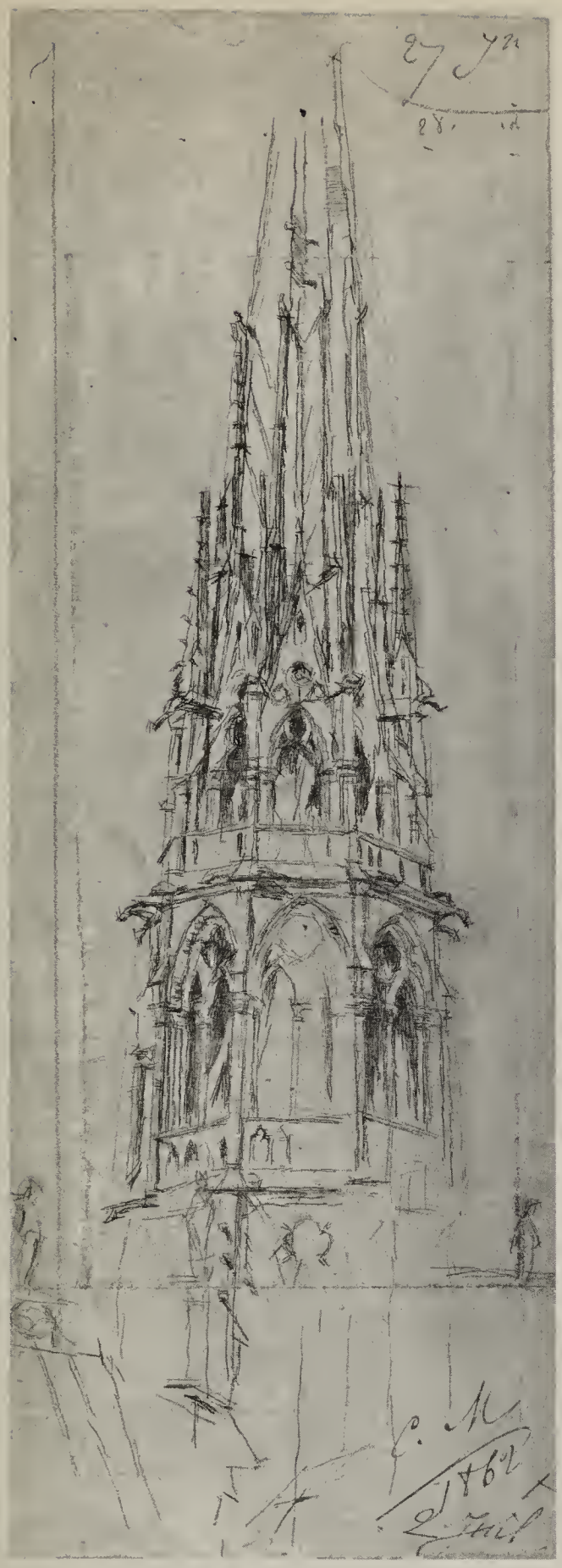
CHARLES MERYON (1821-1868)
Le Pont Neuf, Paris.
Etching. Delteil 33, VI. 1853.
7¼ x 7-3/16 inches.
Ex-collection: A. Roullier.
19.48.

CHARLES MERYON (1821-1868)
La Tour de L'Horloge, Paris.
Etching. Delteil 28, VI. 1852. 10⅜ x 7⅜ inches.
20.9.



CHARLES MERYON (1821-1868)
Study for La Tour de L'Horloge, Paris (The Clock Tower, Paris.) (Delteil 28)
Pencil. 1852. 10 x 7½ inches.
Ex-collection: J. Niel; Destailleur; B. B. MacGeorge.
23.3100

CHARLES MERYON (1821-1868)
La Rue des Chantres, Paris.
Etching. Delteil 42, IV. 1862.
11¾ x 5-13/16 inches.
23.3131.



CHARLES MERYON (1821-1868)
Study for La Rue des Chantres, Paris.
(Delteil 42).
Pencil. 1862. 5¾ x 2⅛ inches.
Ex-collection: B. B. MacGeorge.
23.3093.

CHARLES MERYON (1821-1868)
Study for La Rue des Chantres, Paris. (Delteil 42).
Pencil. 1862. 11⅛ x 3½ inches.
Ex-collection: B. B. MacGeorge.
23.3115.

CHARLES MERYON (1821-1868)
Study for New Caledonia, Large Native Hut on the Road from Balade to Puébo, 1845. (Delteil 67).
Pencil. 1845. 11¼ x 17½ inches.
Ex-collection: G. de Salicis;
B. B. MacGeorge.
22.55.

(c).

— J. Fig. 61 —
6

CHARLES MERYON (1821-1868)
Study for Le Petit Pont, Paris. (Delteil 24).
Pencil. 1850. 7¼ x 10½ inches.
Ex-collection: J. Niel; Destailleur;
B. B. MacGeorge.
23.3108.

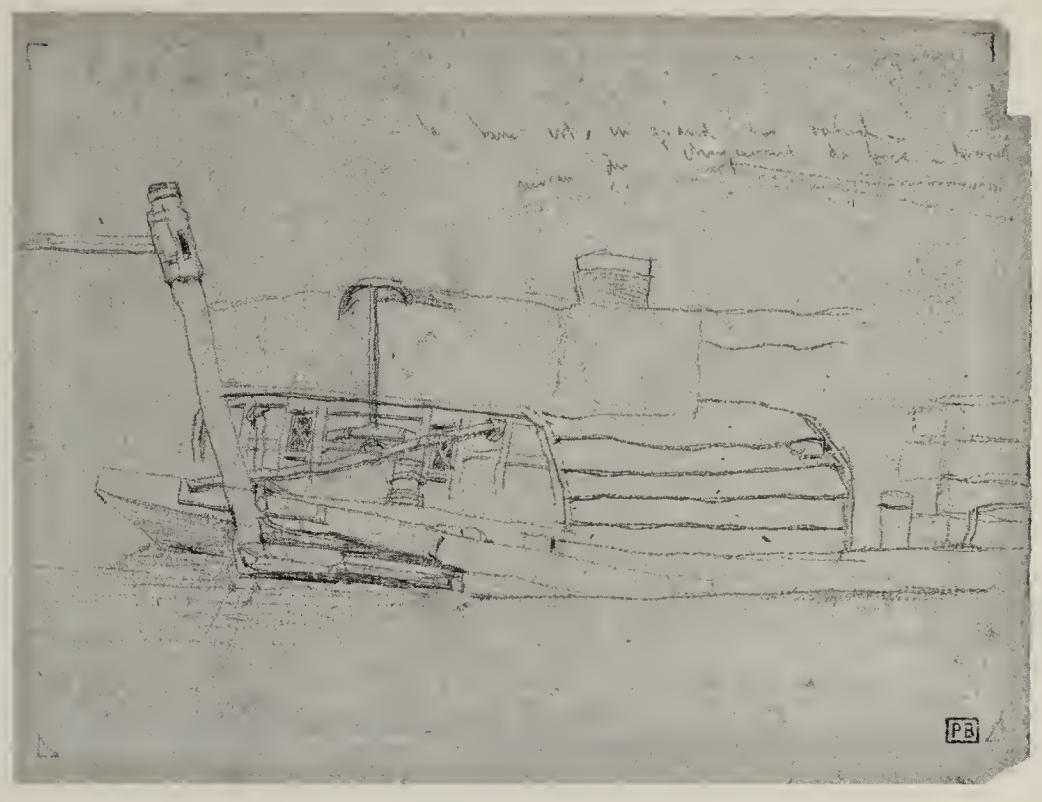
CHARLES MERYON (1821-1868)
Study of the Collège de Montaigu, St. Étienne-du-Mont. (Delteil 30).
Pencil. 1851. 9¾ x 7½ inches.
Ex-collection: J. Niel; Destailleur;
B. B. MacGeorge.
23.3099.

CHARLES MERYON (1821-1868)
Le Petit Pont, Paris.
Etching. Delteil 24, III. 1850.
10⅛ x 7⅜ inches.
Ex-collection: G. Eissler.
23.3089.

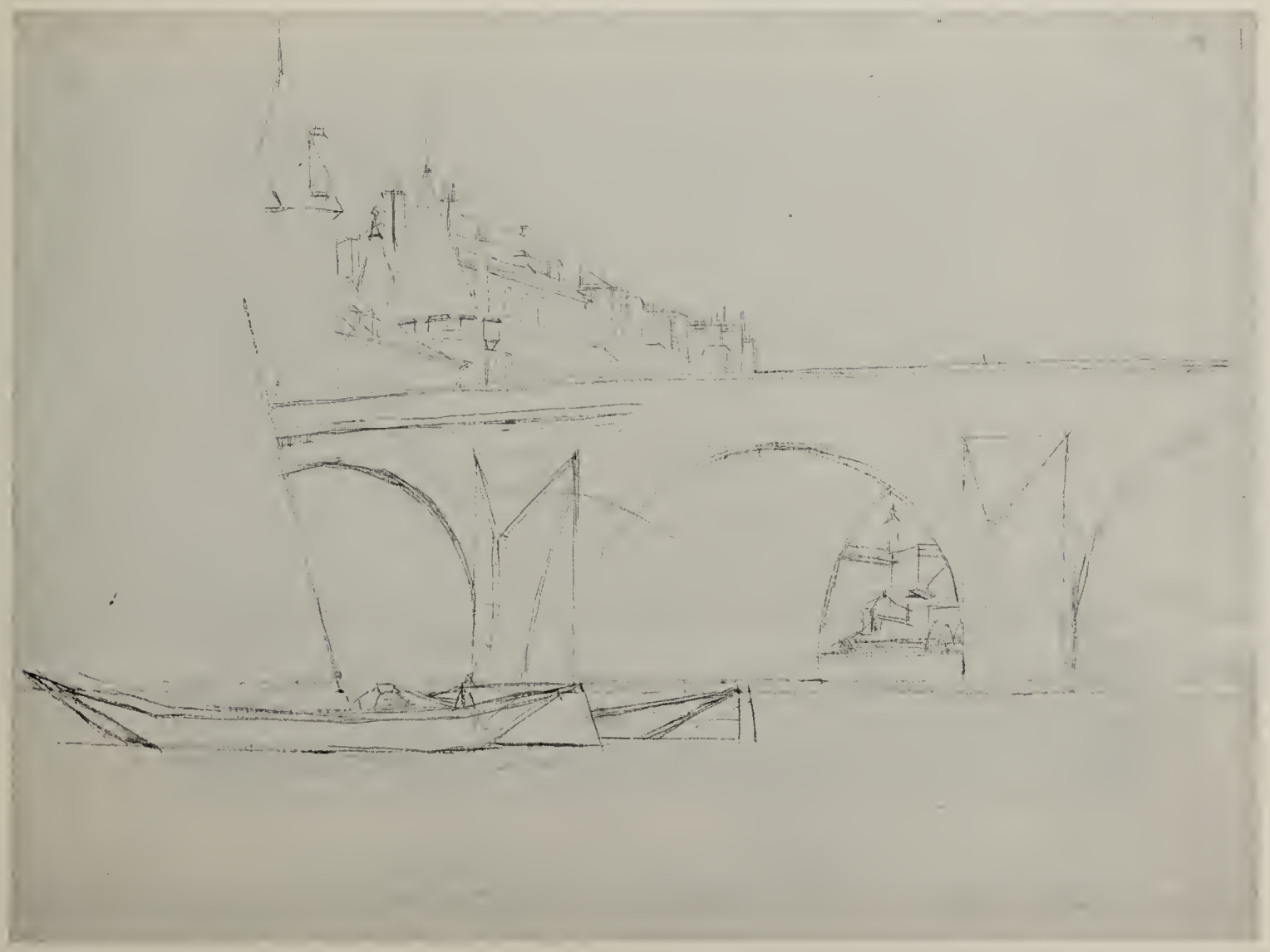
CHARLES MERYON (1821-1868)
Study for Pierre Nivelle (after an engraving by Michael Lasne). (Delteil 81).
Pencil. 1860. 5¼ x 3¾ inches.
Ex-collection: P. Burty; B. B. MacGeorge.
22.50.

CHARLES MERYON (1821-1686)
Portrait of Pierre Nivelle, Bishop of Luzon (1584-1660) (after an engraving by Michael Lasne). Etching.
Delteil 81, VI. 1861. 4¼ x 6¼ inches.
25.7.

CHARLES MERYON (1821-1868)
Study for L'Arche du Pont Notre-Dame. (Delteil 25).
Pencil. 1853. 7 x 9½ inches.
Ex-collection: J. Niel; Destailleur; B. B. MacGeorge.
26.106.



CHARLES MERYON (1821-1868)
A Seine Barge.
Pencil. 1850. 4⅝ x 6⅛ inches.
Ex-collection: P. Burty; J. Heywood;
B. B. MacGeorge.
23.3094.



CHARLES MERYON (1821-1868)
Study for Cover to Set of Etchings: A Voyage to New Zealand, 1842 to 1846. (Delteil 63).
Pencil. 1842-1846. 7 x 10¼ inches.
Ex-collection: G. de Salicis; B. B. MacGeorge.
22.51.

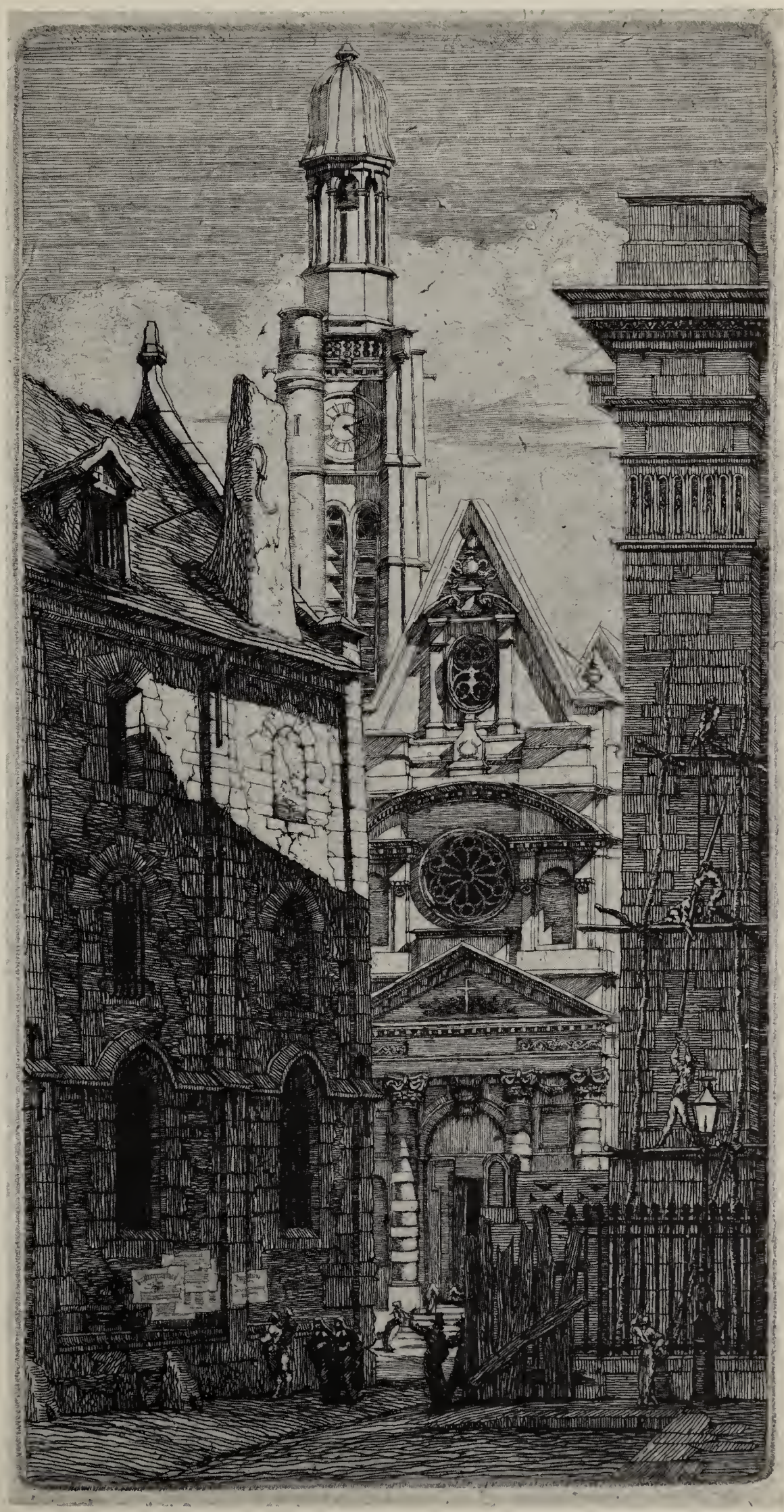
DIVERS PIÈCES GRAVÉES
COLLECTE, GAIN, BUTIN
DE
COURSE et de CHASSE
Faits au mouillage et à la mer pendant
LE
VOYAGE A LA NOUVELLE ZÉLANDE
Accompli de MDCCCXLII à XLVI sur le
NAVIRE RHIN,
Sous les ordres de Mr le Capitaine de Vaisseau, mort contre Amiral en 1852
A. BÉRARD,
COMMANDANT LA STATION A AKAROA
PRESQU'ILE DE BANKS.
1866

CHARLES MERYON (1821-1868)
Cover for the Set of Etchings: A Voyage to New Zealand, 1842 to 1846.
Etching. Delteil 63, VIII. 1866. 6 x 9¼ inches.
21.183.

CHARLES MERYON (1821-1868)
Study for Seine Fishing off Collier's Point, Akaroa, Banks' Peninsula. (Delteil 69)
Pencil. 1845. 5½ x 12½ inches.
Ex-collection: P. Burty; B. B. MacGeorge.
22.53.

CHARLES MERYON (1821-1868)
Seine Fishing off Colliers' Point, Akaroa, Banks' Peninsula, 1845.
Etching. Delteil 69, V. 1863. 6⅛ x 12¾ inches.
21.161.

CHARLES MERYON (1821-1868)
Study for St. Etienne-du-Mont.
(Delteil 30).
Pencil. 1850-1852. 9-13/16 x 5 inches.
Ex-collection: J. Niel; Destailleur;
B. B. MacGeorge.
48.6.



CHARLES MERYON (1821-1868)
St. Etienne-du-Mont, Paris.
Etching. Delteil 30, II. 1852.
9-15/16 x 5⅛ inches.
Ex-collection: A. W. Thibaudeau.
Gift of Winthrop H. Perry Fund. 48.7.

CHARLES MERYON (1821-1868)
Study for St. Etienne-du-Mont. (Delteil 30).
Pencil. 1852. 13½ x 5⅝ inches.
Ex-collection: Sir F. Seymour Haden.
23.3095.

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